No. 8

PRESENT TRUTH.

A TRACT

ON

Reformed Presbyterian History, Doctrine, & Worship.

PRICE THREEPENCE.

LONDONDERRY:
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At a meeting of the Derry Presbytery of the Eastern Reformed Synod, held at Londonderry on the 25th of March, 1879, a paper, prepared by direction of the Presbytery, on our History, Doctrine, and Worship, by a member of the Presbytery, was read; and it was resolved that the Presbytery recommend the publication of said paper for the use of the members and adherents of the congregations under its care.

Signed,

J. F. BECK, M.A., M.D.,
Clerk of Presbytery.

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On Reformed Presbyterian History, Doctrine, & Worship.

A portion of the O. T. Church is commended (1 Chron. xii. 32) for having had understanding of the times, "to know what Israel ought to do." In the epistle of Jude the Church is exhorted earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. In the spirit of these words of inspiration, it is proposed, in the following paper, to call attention to our position and obligations—first, in respect of our history; second, in respect of our doctrinal standards; and, third, in respect of our worship.

The inspired words quoted above amply justify—they require, we believe, the exhibition of a testimony for truth. They show clearly that it is not all that is required of us to seek our own salvation through the belief of the truth. We are to publish that truth—to hold it forth. We would, however, guard against misconception as to the object to be served by a testimony for truth. No testimony or creed is to be substituted for the Word of God. That Word alone is the foundation of our faith, and the authoritative repository of its doctrines. Nevertheless, it is of great importance to consider the doctrines of the faith as ascertained, witnessed to, and transmitted in the progressive history of the Church; and a peculiar obligation rests upon those who profess a faith and a form of worship, in other days sealed by their defenders with their blood. But with all this, and above all this, it rests upon us to furnish a living testimony to the truth in its power to form us to the likeness and love of God.

I. *Our History.*—The history of any section of the Christian Church is one of the tests of its character, to which the scrutiny of the all-seeing Judge is closely and strictly directed. "Even from the days of your fathers," says God to His ancient Church, "ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them." Here the principle is clearly laid down of guilt transmitted and inherited. No generation of the Church stands isolated from the generations that precede or that follow. In regard to preceding generations, a faithful Church is emboldened to say, for present comfort, Our fathers trusted in Thee; they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them. She appeals, in time of sore trial, to the God of her fathers to look and rebuke it. So, in regard

to the generation following, the faithful Church declares of her principles: We will not hide them, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength, and His wonderful works that He hath done. So, also, a humbled, penitent Church acknowledges, We have sinned with our fathers; we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers.

It is of importance to consider this department of our subject in its general principle, as the Covenanting Church has frequently been charged with bestowing too much attention and inquiry on matters connected with the Church's history. It is most plausibly urged that we are concerned with present duty only, and not with the doings of former generations. Now, it is to be feared that the charge referred to, preferred against Reformed Presbyterians, of studying too much the history of their Church, has too little foundation. They are not, in truth, at all fairly open to the charge of thinking too much, or of knowing too much of their ecclesiastical history, or of their distinctive principles. Few of our members bestow, it is to be feared, any diligent study or research on the subject of the immortal contendings of our ecclesiastical ancestry. And yet the distinctive tenets of the Reformed Presbyterian Church can only be fully valued in the light of the sufferings of those from whom they have been handed down. Every truth of importance—specially every truth bearing on the personal and official glory of our Mediatorial King—has passed through conflict. To be sure it is the truth that is immortal. But that truth comes to us more precious—handed down by ecclesiastical ancestors, who died that it might live. As we thus walk about Zion we see hung on her battlements the weapons, conquered and shattered, of many a mighty foe, and "a thousand shields of mighty men," wherewith poisoned darts have been often quenched.

The history of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, as a separate branch of the Christian Church, is well and carefully told in the historical part of our testimony; and one object of these remarks is to encourage the membership of the Church to a more diligent study of our history. The membership of the Reformed Presbyterian Church have been taught that it is not an intelligent service, nor duly honouring to Him who requires that we worship Him in spirit and in truth, to unite with the Church, merely on the ground of the character of the persons presently composing this Church. Every Church member claims to be one of that righteous nation that keepeth the truth. We cannot, therefore, avoid an inquiry, if we desire to worship God with the understanding and the heart, into the ground on which the particular Church, with which we are connected, stands. We cannot judge of the standing of a Church if we are entirely ignorant of its history. A Church's relation to the Word of God, its relation to the foundation of apostles and prophets is discovered, and is to be tested, not only by its doctrines, constitution, and laws, but very specially by its history. By its history we discover what part it has taken, what burden it has borne or shunned; whether it has laboured and not fainted, or consented to dishonourable compromises in the time of trial.

The Reformed Presbyterian history is, therefore, part of her standing; and those who unite in her public church fellowship have the opportunity of considering not merely with what persons they presently associate, but also with what principles and with what testimony for the truth they are to be identified. In an age, for example, when the ordinances, bearing on the worship, order, and government of the house of God, are represented as of little or no account, if only the doctrines of Scripture be preserved and upheld, it ought to arouse us from an easy indifference, generally prevailing, in regard to divine ordinances, to know that our witnessing forefathers deemed Presbyterian Church government as worthy to die for. "I have esteemed," says Hugh M'Kail, in his last testimony, "the government of this Church by Presbyteries to be among the chief of the ordinances of Jesus Christ, which by His blood He has purchased, and ascended up on high to bestow as a gift upon it; as being the very Gospel ministry, in its simplicity and purity, from the inventions of men, and as the means by which other ordinances are administered, and the most fundamental truths made effectual in the hearts of His people; and, therefore, that it ought, with the same carefulness, to be contended for."

The late eminent Dr. M'Leod, of New York, being asked on one occasion to what branch of the Presbyterian Church he belonged, replied, "To no branch—I belong to the root." In illustration and proof of this view of our history, which we consider just and true, we would remark that the history of this kingdom shows clearly that, at the first general establishment of Presbyterianism in Ulster, the whole Presbyterian Church in Ulster was a Reformed Covenanted Church. The Covenant was universally accepted in Ulster by the Presbyterians. In 1660 we find (see Reid's History, 2nd edition, page 239) a Church served by seventy ministers, regularly settled in eighty parishes or congregations, comprising not far from 100,000 souls. In the several departments of government, discipline, worship, and doctrine, an entire conformity with the parent Church of Scotland was strictly maintained. Prior to ordination for the ministry each candidate was required to take the Solemn League and Covenant, binding him to oppose Popery, Prelacy, superstition, and heresy; and to approve and accept of the Westminster Confession of Faith, Catechism, and Directory, as parts of the Covenanted uniformity which that bond was designed to promote. About 1670, we are informed by the historian of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, quoted above, the foundation was laid by the irregular proceedings, as he calls them, of Mr. David Houston, a licentiate, of that schism in the Presbyterian Church in Ulster, which still subsists. Let us consult further the historian of the progress of the State-endowed Presbyterian body. In page 333 of the 2nd vol. of his history he again introduces David Houston to our notice. He tells us that Houston resumed his schismatical practices, and declaimed against the Presbyterians as unsound and unfaithful, but that he was invited by the followers of Renwick and Peden to join their society and exercise his ministry among them, and that in 1686 he joined them. There were still some, it is clear, in

Ulster who adhered to the Covenant. The foundation of a schism had indeed been laid; let the simple story of the facts tell by whom. The leading ministers of the Covenanted Church of Ulster, Reid tells us, had received flattering offers from the flagitious tyrant, Charles the Second, through Sir Arthur Forbes, which resulted, as the Presbyterian Church historian informs us, in the payment, under the name of "secret service money," of six hundred pounds. For this money the ministers returned a letter of thanks to the king, expressing their sense of his Majesty's singular favour. At this very time the troops of his Majesty were employed in dragooning the feeble remnant of the Covenanters in Scotland, who, perilling fortune, home, and life, upheld the cause of Christ's Crown and Covenant on the mountains and moorlands of Scotland. A schism had begun in Ulster, but its guilt must rest, not with those who kept, but with those who abandoned their Covenant engagements, binding them in the following solemn terms to make common cause with their brethren in Scotland:—"We shall, in this common cause of religion, liberty, and peace of the kingdoms, assist and defend all those that enter into this League and Covenant, in the maintaining and pursuing thereof; and shall not suffer ourselves, directly or indirectly, by whatever combination, persuasion, or terror, to be divided and withdrawn from this blessed union and conjunction, whether to make defection to the contrary part, or to give ourselves to a detestable indifferency or neutrality in this cause which so much concerneth the glory of God, the good of the kingdom, and honour of the king." The Covenanters of Ulster saw the tyrants' hands red with the blood of Christ's witnesses. They could not accept either his gifts or bribes.

In 1689 the Revolution Settlement was completed. The tyrant race of Stuart, the bitter foe of the truth, was driven into exile. The forfeiture of the throne by that family, which the followers of Cameron and Renwick had declared in the face of bonds, imprisonment, and death, was now solemnly ratified by the estates of the kingdom. The Covenanters offered their adhesion to that Settlement with such necessary provisions as might secure liberty, civil and religious; they, also, specified the king's duty to profess and preserve the pure religion, and the work of reformation; and they concluded thus, Upon such terms as these we tender our allegiance to King William, and hope to give more pregnant proof of our loyalty to his majesty, in adverse as well as in prosperous providences, than they have done, or can do, who profess implicit subjection to absolute authority, so long only as Providence preserves its grandeur.

The Covenanters refused to accept the Revolution Settlement. They were, no doubt, in a great minority in the course they adopted. The greater part of the ministers, says Hetherington, were those who had either partially conformed to prelacy, or had accepted of the indulgences from time to time offered. The Covenanters felt, they saw clearly, that the great principle for which they had struggled, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the sole king and head of His Church, was scarcely either understood or felt (Hetherington) in the erection of the Revolution

Church. They refused to enter that Church, and, under the cold neglect and scorn of the world, they again unfurled the banner of the Covenant. Their conduct at this crisis is fully vindicated by the disruptions and secessions of subsequent times.

The same principle, under different circumstances, has demanded from Reformed Presbyterians in Ireland a corresponding line of action. In Ireland, where state policy directed the erection of a prelatic establishment, Presbyterianism, and eventually Popery, were subsidized. To such a policy Covenanters could not be consenting parties. The views which their Covenant so strikingly expresses, as to the glory of God and the good of the realm, necessitated their most earnest and active protest against what has now come to be known as concurrent endowment. Against that policy, as it still exists in our army and navy and other chaplaincies, Covenanters must hold up an earnest testimony. While the pecuniary advantages of this state connection are transient and trifling, the principles compromised by it, in our judgment, intimately concern the glory of the Messiah and the spiritual fidelity of His Church. That Church, of which Christ is the head, cannot, with due loyalty to her King, seek relief and comfort in her wilderness trials from patrons who are committed to the maintenance and upholding of the anti-Christian interest. We will, of course, be told that the arrangements in question are sanctioned by the voice of the great majority of the nation, and are dictated by public policy, carrying with it such an obvious public interest, that it is an impertinence to offer any protest. But the all-important question for Christ's Church to consider is, whether or not the policy referred to is consistent with that fealty which nations and Churches owe to Him who is the faithful and true witness, the Prince of the kings of the earth. If we duly remember that Christ is King of nations, the support of error by the nation involves the very highest guilt. The Reformers viewed prelacy as anti-Christian; yet it has been the favoured form of Church polity through all our history. The same Reformers came from under the Papacy that they might not be partakers of its sins, nor receive of its plagues; yet has this system been legally authorized in some parts of our dominions, its interests have been even upheld by force of British arms, and it is still systematically supported from the public purse. From this system our history testifies that we have held aloof in the past, and the grounds and reasons of our dissent, as a Church, appear no less strong at the present day than at any former period. One great principle of the Second Reformation was the headship of Christ over the nations of the earth. In vindication of this principle our fathers opposed both the Papal and prelatic systems, and all furtherance of the interests of these systems by state recognition or active support of any kind. Is this principle of less obligation now? To be sure we have no influence or weight of numbers to array against a system of indiscriminate endowment of religion, still sanctioned by the vast majority of both Houses of Parliament. We can only utter our protest. That protest may appear weak and disregarded. But witnesses for Christ's prerogatives are sacred to God, and secured by

His care—(Revelation, chap. xi.); and "great voices" shall yet confirm their testimony, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become our Lord's and His Christ's.

While, however, calling attention to our dissent, in our Church capacity, from, and protest against, public national support of anti-Christian systems, we rejoice to acknowledge the efforts of earnest men in Parliament and out of it, belonging to other Churches, who have nobly struggled against the national patronage and endowment of erroneous systems. More particularly, we would observe, legislation of late years has brought clearly to view an important fact in regard to the nature and constitution of Parliament, namely, that neither is the Sovereign by her coronation oath, nor the members of the legislature by their oaths, prevented from making any changes which may seem good to them in the religious establishments or Church endowments of the empire. It is enough to mention, in proof of this, the disestablishment of the Irish Church, and the earnest efforts now being put forth in all parts of the kingdom towards the disestablishment and disendowment both of the English and Scotch established churches. In all these changes, whether already accomplished or demanded, we cannot but rejoice, yea, and will rejoice, that He who rules in the kingdom of men has been weakening the anti-Christian interest in our empire, through the discredit so largely and generally cast on the policy of indiscriminate endowment of all forms of religion. It is enough for us that in all this He is working who confirmeth the word of His servant, and performeth the counsel of His messengers.

II. *Doctrine.*—When our Lord sent forth His apostles, and gave, through them, the promise of His perpetual presence with His ministers and people, He indicated the great end of the ministry to be to teach —to teach all things; and the rule of their teaching whatsoever He hath appointed. Doctrine, therefore, instruction, the communication and enforcement of divine truth, is the main design of the Church; and the truth given by Christ is her common heritage. There is no such thing as an inner circle of doctrine, the privilege of a priesthood —no doctrine reserved to any special class. All that Christ has commanded is to be taught. One of the grand ideas of the Papal apostacy is, that not instruction, but what is called cultus, that is, worship, service, is the chief design of the Church. Hence, the prominence given to music, to outward effect, to posture. Nor has this been confined to the Papal Church. It appears to be an inevitable attendant on Prelacy of every school. And as it has virtually displaced teaching and preaching, in the sense indicated in our Lord's commission, in the Church of Rome, so it appears to be rapidly achieving the same result in the Church of England. It will be seen, in this connexion, with what far-seeing sagacity and Scriptural clearness of view our Reformers of Scotland held Prelacy to be anti-Christian. The enemy fears the truth. The notorious Laud of Canterbury, the persecutor of the Puritans, could not conceal his dislike to, his abhorence of, "sound doctrine." The system of doctrine which our standards present has some aspects, as we think, peculiar to itself and important to re-

member. It is full and clear. We do not mean to convey that the Westminster Standards are a perfect magazine of truth. That description only applies to the Word of God. But we venture to remark that our Confession and Catechisms present the truth without disguise or concealment. Error courts disguise. It relies on reservation, on concealment. The truth claims to be made known. And we submit that our standards of doctrine, presented in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, Larger and Shorter, are distinguished for the clearness and freedom from disguise in which they present that system of truth which they claim to be founded upon, and agreeable to, the Word of God. Salvation in them is all of God. Uncertainty as regards the operation, objects, or results of God's saving purpose here finds no acknowledgment. Man's utter ruin and powerlessness to save himself are the aspects in which our race is presented in these standards. This system is sometimes, indeed generally, in our day, called Calvinism. It is so called, we presume, because, under the reformer Calvin, it emerged from under the eclipse which it had suffered during previous ages of anti-Christian darkness. But, in almost every point, it had, many ages before Calvin, a distinguished expounder in the celebrated Augustine, and earlier still, and of supreme authority, it is the system of doctrine for whose defence the Great Apostle was specially set. The ruling idea of this system of truth is, salvation wholly of God, originating in His absolute and pre-determined purpose; as the ruling idea of the systems opposed to it is man's free will, in its operation limiting and conditioning the divine purpose.

In connection with this subject, we cannot omit to notice the place assigned to Scripture in our Confession. It is declared to be the Word of God—the only infallible rule of faith and practice. In vain do we point to a system of doctrine, as exhibiting the truth and will of God, if that Book, in which these doctrines are presented, is not accepted in the true and proper sense as the Word of God. Let us remember that, when we speak of the Word of God, we mean that God is its author, that what it affirms is true, that what it declares to be right is right, and what it declares to be wrong is wrong, because its sayings are the "true sayings of God." In thought and language, in substance and form, our standards declare that the Scripture has been given by inspiration of God, that holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

This Word of truth, in the truths which it contains, and in the mutual connexion of these truths, in one harmonious system of truth, it is our duty to study and understand, that we may be qualified to take part with the Church of God, in her public acknowledgment of "the faith of Jesus." Let it not be forgotten that every Christian, while he seeks his own salvation through the knowledge of Christ, is also called to bear faithful and intelligent testimony to the doctrine delivered in the Scripture. He is to hold fast the Word of life, but also to hold it forth.

But how can he do this if the true form of sound doctrine be a matter of indifference to him; and if he accept the popular theory of

the present day, that he has no personal responsibility in connexion with the doctrines held, preached, or propagated by the Church of which he is a member? At the present moment, it is a notorious fact that multitudes in the membership of large Churches, professing to hold the Westminster Standards, utterly repudiate many of their distinctive doctrines.

Now, we think we see one of the most dangerous tendencies of the age in the indifference openly professed, and more generally felt, to sound doctrine. An attractive worship, service, the strength of numbers, importance as a political element in the State, these and other considerations, wholly inferior and earthly, are slowly but surely overthrowing men's belief in the Bible as the inspired authoritative system of revealed truth, with which it is of the highest importance that the preacher should deal faithfully in the pulpit, and to the doctrines of which, in her creeds and confessions, intelligently and faithfully exhibited, it is the high prerogative of the Church to bear witness. No wonder that, in the view of an observant world, the Church's public authoritative confessions cease to possess any value. They cease to be true. The creed of a Church is not merely its authoritative creed, but the faith of its members. The Church is what its members are. It really professes what they believe. Hence, we may find creeds remaining when orthodoxy is gone. The orthodox Confessions of Geneva remained after the Church had quite left her first faith. The Churches of Germany had lapsed into Rationalism, while the Augsburg Confession was nominally retained. The Papal Church of France had passed into infidelity and atheism, though, strange to say, still retaining the profession of the apostle's creed. Let us remember that the last days of the Church's decadence are to be ushered in by false prophets, that when Christ shall come again faith shall hardly be found, that a general apostacy is to occur, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, that in the last days perilous times shall come, when men shall not endure sound doctrine; and let us seek the outpouring of the Spirit of truth and of all grace that ministers and people may be braced to high, intelligent, and holy resolve, as members of that Covenant host "which keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."

III. *Worship.*—The standards of our Church declare, in very distinct terms, our obligation to contend for the ordinances, as well as the faith, once delivered to the saints. On the subject of worship, for example, the following errors are condemned in our Testimony—that there is no obligation to maintain secret prayer, family worship, and private social prayer; that to worship God in any way that conscience may dictate is the right of all men; and that all worship which is offered to God according to conscience is acceptable to Him. The sentiments are also condemned, and the practice testified against, of those who deny the suitableness of the inspired psalms to New Testament worship, and, on this account, introduce into their place songs of human composition. In making of an oath, the superstitious form of swearing by laying the hand upon, or kissing, the Gospels is sternly

condemned. These, which are merely brief extracts from the fuller details of the Testimony, are presented to call attention to the fact that the Reformed Presbyterian Church regards Divine ordinances as carrying with them the same authority, and as being invested with the same sacredness, as divine truths. They both proceed from the same infinite wisdom, and are directed to the same gracious ends. It is true that Christ, and all His blessings, become ours by the faith of the Gospel, but our dulness is such, as Calvin observes in his Institutes, as to need external help, whereby faith may be produced, grow, and reach its maturity. God has, therefore, instituted a Church, and deposited with it the treasure of preaching. He has appointed in that Church pastors and teachers; He has given them power of inspection, of rule, and of discipline, to exercise over the flock of Christ all that power for its welfare. All this is of *divine* appointment; it is also of *permanent* appointment. The result designed by the various divinely-appointed ordinances and officers is not completed till the end of the world—(Eph. iv. 13); the commission to the ministry of the Word extends to all the earth—Preach the Gospel to every creature; and the promise of the divine presence is co-extensive with the commission—Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.

The ordinances and officers of the Christian Church, we see from these passages, taken in their sublime connection, rest on the ground of the covenant of grace. Grace is the blessing of that covenant; so the *means* of grace belong to its sure and well-ordered provisions. The means of grace, the worship of the Church, her officers, her discipline, her order, and government, have all been ordered by the infinite wisdom of a covenant God, and come to us through the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the head of the election of grace. How delightful to trace the origin and institution of these ordinances! How momentously important that we wait upon God in them, and seek in them the fulfilment of the new covenant promise—I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people.

Let us consider a little more in detail the subject of worship. And, in the first place, we would refer to the worship of God in secret. Its obligation is clearly to be inferred from the fact that true religion is always personal. But secret prayer is also distinctly enjoined. Thou, when thou enterest into thy closet, pray to thy Father. We would only observe further, in this connection, that in these secret exercises of worship we are furnished with powerful means and aids to holiness; and also, with a more delicate test than our attention to public ordinances affords, of our spiritual state. We are less likely to succeed in deceiving ourselves than in deceiving others.

The important duty of family worship next falls to be noticed. It has been generally understood that the observance of family worship by the heads of households, where outward opportunity and natural capacity are afforded, is a necessary condition of Church membership. This we have seen in our quotation from the testimony of the Church, but we would rather, in affectionate terms, ask the attention of heads of families to the paramount obligation and the blessed results, under

God, of the earnest spiritual observance of family worship. Let the position of the family in the Church be considered, in relation to the visible administration of that everlasting Covenant on which, as we have said, all the means of grace and divine institutions are founded. The promise is to believing parents and their seed. The visible Church, in the beautiful language of the Confession of Faith, consists of those who profess the true religion with their children. God has given the family, that is to say, an important place under the outward and visible administration of the Covenant of grace. He has drawn closer the obligation which even nature doth teach, resting on families, to live in His fear and to seek His salvation. He has given sweet promises to the family, and habitation of the just. These promises call for faith—they imply its exercise; and faith will express itself in prayer. He has given in His Word bright examples of domestic piety; examples not above our reach or of unapproachable excellence; of men, once like us, with suffering tried.

"Let family worship," says M'Cheyne, "be performed regularly, fully, and spiritually. Discharge it as you would avoid that curse which is in the house of the wicked. In the observance of it expect that your children will be saved. A saved family! Who can realize the bliss here and hereafter? But if hell can be made by one bitter pang yet more bitter, it will be through the recollection of the fear of the Almighty, cast aside in the regulation and ordering of the family." And it is of serious consideration for all who acknowledge the Christian obligation, in every sphere and relation of life, how far the common objections to family worship, such as want of time, want of capacity, a feeling of shame, or of the inconsistency of the daily life with the duty referred to, will avail before the judgment seat of Christ.

The public worship of God, in its outward form at least, is observed with more or less regularity by all who call themselves Christians. The obligations of this service, however, so characteristic of the Church of God in all ages, climes, and regions of the world, are not so generally considered in their true nature and ground. Especially, we have to remember the perpetual obligation of the Sabbath. This perpetual obligation we infer from the place assigned to the Sabbath in the Decalogue, clearly indicating that its enactment at Sinai was simply the rehearsal or re-enactment of the original law which the nations had cast off, but which the Covenant people was now raised up to uphold. Its special bearing on the private and public service of God we infer from the significant words—"The Sabbath is a sign between Me and the children of Israel for ever." Now, if the regular recurrence of the seventh day Sabbath, is fixed by divine ordinance, it is not left to us to regulate our attendance at the sanctuary by mere habit or convenience. God has appointed one day in seven for His public worship. We must, therefore, cease to be the mere creatures of circumstances, such as trifling family engagements, or, as in many cases, the weather. Our attendance at the sanctuary becomes a matter of obligation—of humble submission to the divine will. The public worship of God remains for ever bound up with the ordinance of the

Sabbath. Ye shall keep My Sabbath and reverence My sanctuary. They who truly keep the Sabbath as a divine ordinance will reverence God's sanctuary; and they who wait on the services of the sanctuary, in humble believing regard to the divine appointment on which they rest, will esteem the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable. Such persons will not be ashamed of the word "Sabbath." The Lord's day, the Christian Sabbath, as the Westminster Catechism, of which many who profess the faith of that Catechism seem on this point to be grossly ignorant, denominates it, will not be to them either an ecclesiastical holy day merely, or the "Sunday" of visiting and fashionable recreation, but the Sabbath of the Lord, carrying in its very name its institution and authority.

Two theories as to the rule of worship were maintained by the party of the Reformation in withdrawing from the corruptions of Rome. One, the English Church theory, that nothing should be introduced into the worship of God which is prohibited in Scripture. In the 22nd article of the Church of England, the Church, it is said, has power to ordain rites and ceremonies, but nothing ordained must be contrary to God's Word. The other, the Puritan theory, whose supporters, after a long struggle, were finally expelled from the English Church, declares, as in the Confession of Faith, chap. xxi., that the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations or devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way *not prescribed in the holy Scriptures.*

The Larger Catechism, in harmony with this, declares that the Second Commandment forbids "using or anywise approving any religious worship not instituted by God Himself. The Shorter Catechism declares that the Second Commandment forbids the worshipping of God by images, or any other way not *appointed in His Word.* The Reformation, it will be observed, was a protest, not against the worship of a false god, that is to say, not against heathenism, but against the worship (so called) of the true God in a false way. The First Commandment limits us as to the object of worship. The Second limits us as to the manner of worship. On this commandment, it will be observed, our Standards specially found, in regard to the rule of worship. It is not alone the making of graven images that is forbidden. This is one species of the sin. It is clear, however, that all the other species are alike forbidden. God has reserved to Himself, that is to say, to furnish such representation of Himself as is needful for us, and as is worthy of Him in our worship. He is the sole object of worship, and He has reserved to Himself the high prerogative of dictating the mode of it.

The will of God is the sole rule of worship in all the substance of it. Regard to that will it is that constitutes worship a religious act at all. Hence, in the institution of worship in its various parts, we have the emphatic expression, "My words," "to which ye shall not add, and from which ye shall not diminish ought." The institution of worship, in view of these and similar statements of God's Word, and specially of

the Second Commandment, is completely withdrawn from the pleasure, taste, authority, and wisdom of men, and reserved wholly, and for ever, to the pleasure and wisdom of the Lord of the Church. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.

Such is the testimony of our standards, founded, we believe, on the Scriptures, to the rule or manner of worship. A more particular account is presented in the chapter of the Confession of Faith, to which we now refer—chapter xxi., of the several *parts* of religious worship. These are said to be prayer, the reading of the Scriptures with Godly fear, the sound preaching, and conscionable hearing, of the Word, in obedience unto God, with understanding, faith, and reverence, singing of psalms with grace in the heart, as also the due administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments instituted by Christ, which are all ordinary and stated ordinances; besides religious oaths and vows, solemn fastings, and thanksgivings upon special occasions, which are in their several times and seasons to be used in an holy and religious manner, and are extraordinary or occasional ordinances. These parts of worship, it is to be observed, are divine ordinances, each one resting on the authority of the King and Head of the Church. The Scriptures are to be read in public (Neh. viii. 8, Luke iv. 16); in families (Deut. vi. 6—9, Ps. lxxviii. 5); in secret (John v. 39). The preaching of the Word is, by the same authority, to continue to the end of the world; by the hand of persons properly called thereto, and by the appointment of Christ holding office in connection therewith, as pastors, teachers, stewards of the mysteries of God, bishops, or overseers, and angels of the Churches. By the same authority, Christ's people are to hear that Word, to know and acknowledge those who labour in it among them, and are over them in the Lord (1 Thess. v. 12), to obey those who have the rule over them (Hebrews xiii. 17), to provide for their maintenance (Gal. vi. 6), and to pray for them (2 Thess. iii. 1).

We shall only notice further the ordinance of praise. It is set forth as the "singing of psalms with grace in the heart." For this ordinance we have the express injunction of Old Testament Scripture. "Sing unto Him, sing psalms." And the service of praise is distinguished from ceremonial worship. I will praise the name of God with a song. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or a bullock that hath horns and hoofs. Under the New Testament economy, the singing of psalms is continued and confirmed. See Eph. v. 19, Col. iii. 16. God has given a book of psalms. They were specially intended for public praise under a former dispensation; and, although the apostles, in unfolding the doctrine, form, and worship of the New Testament Church, as Christ commanded them, point out and insist on the abrogation of ritual institutions, they give no intimation that the inspired psalms are to be displaced or supplemented in New Testament worship.* On the contrary, the Epistle of James directs—If any be merry, let him sing psalms. Here, therefore, taking our stand on the divine ordinance, "sing psalms," we refuse utterly to present on the same footing, in the praise of the sanctuary, the words of man and the words

* See Shaw on the Confession.

of God. We believe, with our Confession, that we are to "sing psalms." But we cannot admit, in face of the Second Commandment, that obedience to God in this ordinance means that we are to sing the psalms, or some of them, which the Holy Ghost has inspired, together with whatever other songs the (so-called) Christian taste of the age may demand. The widespread departure from the divine ordinance of praise appears even in a more serious light, if possible, from the arguments that are employed to justify the disuse of inspired psalms in praise, and the substitution of hymns of human composition. We are told the psalms are not suited to an advanced condition of the Church, to the light of the Gospel day, to the higher spiritual experience and life of the Christian dispensation, to children. All this we believe to be of the most dangerous tendency. It brings the Word of God to the test of human taste. We have been familiar with the dreadful effects produced, especially in Germany, by rationalistic teaching, in overthrowing the authority of Scripture under pretence of higher reason; and we can anticipate no less dreadful effects, from the spiritualistic teaching of our day which, under colour of higher spiritual life, disparages the songs indited by the Holy Ghost in which, by divine appointment, past generations have praised, and in which, by the same authority, generations yet unborn shall praise and magnify the Lord.

In bringing these remarks to a close, we would observe (1), on the subject of our Church's history, that a careful study of it will at once shed light on many great principles, and furnish encouragement to us while still called upon to contend for these principles. We learn that principle and truth and immortal; and that God richly honours those who, even amid suffering and trial, are resolute for their defence. For thousands of generations He shows mercy to them that maintain His pure worship, who fear Him and keep His commandments. Is the reward of the fidelity of the Covenanters to their heavenly King yet exhausted? Nay, so long as liberty is prized in the state, and so long as Christ's truth, and the Word of His patience, are regarded as a priceless treasure by the Church, so long will men honour the men whose standard on the mountains of Scotland heralded the dawn of freedom, and so long will the Church honour the courage and heroic endurance of the men who died that the truth might live. We offer no apology for calling attention at this time to Reformed Presbyterian history, doctrine, and worship. We do it in no boastful spirit. But while we deem it a duty at all times to walk about Zion, and go round about her, to consider her palaces, and mark her bulwarks, this seems to be a special duty at the present time. A struggle for truth is going on. Should this tract come under the eye of brethren of other Churches who are engaged in the conflict, we would ask them to call to mind, as we desire to do ourselves from our history, that truth is eternal, and that integrity in the maintenance of the Church's purity, independence, and loyalty to her heavenly King, is of infinitely greater value than all this world can give or take away.

2.—Referring to our review of Reformed Presbyterian doctrine, we would remind our readers that the times call for a resolute exhibition of sound doctrine. No one can fail to see that there is a widespread tendency to rest in vague generalities, to be equally satisfied, if that were possible, with Calvinistic, Arminian, or Pelagian teaching. Such was not the spirit of the Church of the Second Reformation. Such is not the spirit in which, according to the glorious promise of the new Covenant, men shall seek for God with all their heart. Such a spirit, as we now refer to, seems proper only to those who desire to forget that one great purpose of the Church's organization is to keep the faith, and to preserve, pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath appointed in His Word.

3.—Our views of worship we believe to be in accordance with the Word of God. We also regard them as, in the highest sense, favourable to a true and lasting union in the Church. God's people long for union. He has promised to gratify their desire. He has promised to give His people one heart and one way. The means which He employs, under the blessing of His spirit, are well fitted to unite. His truth unites. The things of the great salvation unite. The great things of Christ's kingdom unite. God's spirit is the all-reconciling spirit. This Church unity, in its true and proper notion, is to be visibly maintained and enjoyed in the observance of divine ordinances. It is a spiritual unity. In the room of it, and for ages hiding it from the view of men, was set up an idol of visible union in the anti-Christian interest. To uphold this idol men were called on to surrender humble, spiritual submission to Christ's ordinances, and to accept the dogmas and decrees of an usurping power in the house of God. The Reformers cast aside this idol, and re-asserted the true principle of Catholic unity, submission to Christ in the doctrine of His Word, and in the institutions of His sanctuary. Under other forms and names this idol has been re-erected in Protestant communions. It is held, for example, that no matter what divergences there may be in faith, and worship, and order, if only outward communion and visible unity are maintained, a great advantage is gained. The so-called advantage must, however, consist merely in an organization possessing great wealth, or great numbers, or great political influence, or securing some other carnal interest. Where there are vital differences in regard to the faith and the worship of the Church, it can hardly be pretended there is spiritual communion. There is in fact schism without separation, the only notion of schism, it may be mentioned, which the Scripture exemplifies. (See Epistle to the Corinthians, where alone this evil is discussed.) Such schism there must be so long as and wherever human ordinances supersede the divine, and the supreme authority of Scripture, in the faith and worship of the Church, is to any extent set aside. Let us, in all humility, holding fast the faith and the ordinances once delivered to the saints, seek to have a place, however humble, in the order of means whereby that blessed time shall be hastened, when God's name shall be one and His praise one throughout all the earth.